

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Meade School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

Team Members: Peggy Mattke, Julie Carpenter, and Linda Turner, Program Representative, Mary Borgman, Linda Shirley and Barb Boltjes, Education Specialists and Dave Halverson, Transition Liaison.

Dates of On Site Visit: February 15, 16 and 17, 2005

Date of Report: March 2, 2005

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Tables D, H, C, B, E, F
- Comprehensive plan
- Meade negotiated agreement
- Surveys
- Publications of child find notices

- Yearly child find results
- File reviews
- Child count data
- Professional development training
- Reading Recovery information
- Special Education Curriculum Department
- Board policies
- TAT information
- Screening data
- Pre referral form
- Private school information
- IEP's

Promising practice

The Special Services Department has an informative, parent-friendly website at www.meade.k12.sd.us. All branches of Special Services are listed and services are explained. Staff members are also listed and a synopsis of their teaching is attached to their name. Child find and kindergarten screening dates and contact numbers are listed on the website.

Children enrolled in home school or non-accredited private schools receive services at Meade School District. The students are afforded more rights than identification and evaluation. Home schooled students deemed eligible for special education are offered special education services, including related services, in the district. Most home schooled students eligible for speech/language therapy take advantage of this opportunity.

Meade School District employs a part time assessment coordinator who directs and coordinates the state and district assessments. The coordinator also collates and analyzes the data from all assessment measures and looks for trends. Summarized data reports are presented to the superintendent and the administrators, the instructional council, the teachers, and members of the school board. This information helps guide the instruction in the classrooms to better improve the performance level of students with disabilities in the classroom and on state wide assessments.

It is the philosophy of the district that in order for students to build knowledge and skills for success today and tomorrow, quality education must be provided as a result of effective instruction. A consistent and continuous system of teacher appraisal, both formal and informal, is an integral part of maintaining high quality instruction.

Furthermore, it is an effective practice of this district to have non-tenured teachers evaluated by both the special education director and building principal. This practice ensures the new teachers are given feedback in a special education sense and also their effectiveness in their building. Collaboration among the administrators is the key in evaluating staff members.

The special education department insists that every certified staff member attends a professional development opportunity at least one time a year. Two years ago, four special education teachers were fully trained in Reading Recovery and currently are participating in the continuing contact classes. These four teachers are considered reading specialists in their field of special education. With their expertise in teaching reading, they can advance students with learning disabilities faster than other teachers. The four teachers use their Reading Recovery strategies on all levels and ages of students.

The three nurses in the district are certified CPR trainers. At three inservices a year the nurses offer CPR training to eighteen staff members. Many special education services staff members are trained in CPR and have also recertified if necessary. The CPR training is an ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of the students and educators.

In April 2003, a special education curriculum department was added to the instructional council of the district. A special education teacher was chosen to lead and direct the department. The job goal is to use teaching and leadership skills to assure quality curriculum in the K-12 department and to assure a quality staff development program for the teachers in the department. The special education chair attends monthly Instructional Council meetings, chairs two hour pertinent and relevant meetings on inservice days, provides leadership with curriculum and regulation issues with special education, communicates effectively and positively with special education teachers of the district and works in coordination with the curriculum Director and Special Services Director.

A technology needs assessment was conducted with all staff members of the district. The document shows the needs and skills that need to be developed for the next three school years.

Professional development of all staff members is specifically tracked by the central office. Data is available on what staff members attended for professional development, where it was, how many attended and what was the content.

Five Meade School District paraprofessionals attended the STEP (Standards for Teacher Education Program) Academy in July 2004 in Brookings, SD. The week was divided equally between math and reading curriculum; centering around paraprofessionals helping in the classroom. The STEP Academy gave the paraprofessionals an opportunity to hear wonderful key speakers, innovative instructors on behavior strategies and modifying curriculum. It also provided a means for the paraprofessionals to earn credits for those interested in gaining a two year degree.

Extended school year services for Meade School District is extremely open. A student in special education does not have to meet a regression/recoupment, emerging skill or maintenance of critical life skills criteria in order to participate in an individualized ESY program. Participation in ESY is determined by the IEP team members. If the members feel the student needs or would benefit from ESY services, then a plan is coordinated for the summer months. Some students attend an academic based program, some attend all summer long scheduled community events to work on socialization skills, some attend summer long swim lessons with the OT/PT, others have a job coach hired to work on vocational skills, and some students work on day-long work crews.

The Meade School District has a comprehensive K-12 Drug/Alcohol/Violence/ Tobacco prevention program. The program includes research-based curriculum used at various grade levels, such as Second Step Violence Prevention program, Project Alert, DARE (at 5th, 8th, and 10th grade levels), Project Northland (at some grade levels), Life skills (at some elementary and middle school levels), as well as after-school prevention groups, such as Just Say No, Youth-to-Youth, TATU (Teens Against Tobacco Use).

Data regarding the program is collected from the Tri-Ethnic Alcohol and Drug Survey done by Colorado State University as well as from local law enforcement and school data. The school and community have protective factors in place that include a community prevention committee (ABC—Action for the Betterment of the Community), the Suicide Prevention sub-committee formed with the local law enforcement and school district and community prevention committee (ABC); the violence Prevention sub-committee formed with the local domestic violence crisis shelter, school district, and community prevention committee (ABC); the Methamphetamine Prevention Coalition formed in the community. There is also a Tobacco Prevention Coalition as a sub-committee formed with the community prevention committee. There is a Crisis Intervention Committee formed with school officials, law enforcement, ministerial personnel, fire department officials, and community people.

The strong character education component (Character Speaks) is another protective factor. This endeavor is implemented in the schools, and is expanding more into the community. All staff report doing monthly activities relating to Character Education in their classrooms.

All district staff has attended one-day training on Bullying (November 2003). The staff received bullying prevention information and materials from the State & Drug-Free School Coordinator.

Meets requirements

Child Find, referral, kindergarten screening, and evaluation are conducted through cooperatively established procedures. Meade school district and Head Start provide an early childhood team to facilitate the developmental screening of three and four-year old children. Screenings may include a minimum of the DIAL-3, a visual screen and a hearing screen. Meade School District provides monthly screenings, which are available to all Head Start, Parent as Teachers, private providers, parents, and the early intervention program children. Should any of these groups have concerns regarding the development of a child, a referral is made to the district early intervention program. This may result in an evaluation to determine eligibility for special services.

The referral system differs at the various building levels. Students are helped in the classroom before a referral is made through collaborative efforts of the general education staff along with special education, Title I staff and the building counselors.

There are no accredited private schools in Meade school district. However, if an accredited private school originated in the district, any child in need of special education or special education and related services enrolled in the parochial or accredited private school, would receive the same referral, evaluation and placement process that is utilized for any child in special education. Students in out of district placements are afforded the same rights as students in the district.

The special education team was given time to examine individual analysis reports from the Dakota Step for each student on their caseload. The reports were analyzed with the Assessment Coordinator, Special Education Director and teachers. The special education teachers used the scientific data to determine their students strengths and weaknesses with the core standards. Lesson planning and goals and objectives on the IEP are now centered on content standard weaknesses.

In regards to Table C, Meade school district has not had significant discrepancies between long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through interviews and actual review of the district website, the monitoring team agrees the website provides numerous opportunities for all staff, and parents as well as community members to access information pertaining to the Meade school district. The website includes information pertaining to the following: district offices, a school district profile and map, enrollment procedures, "In Touch" the district newsletter, school board and minutes, No Child Left Behind-Parent Information, acceptable use policy, educational specification, focus on education, public notices, state report card and the superintendent's inservice presentation. The district newsletter is also mailed to every household in Meade school district.

Through interviews with administrators, regular education teachers and special education teachers, the monitoring team noted home school and private school students are afforded more rights than identification and evaluation.

Through staff interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team determined Meade school district has implemented data driven processes. The district staff know how to use data to drive their instruction and in turn this data driven process improves the performance level of students with disabilities in the classroom and on state and district wide assessments

Through interview and observation, the monitoring team agrees Meade school district professional development model is driven through district wide needs assessment. Staff development opportunities are available to all staff during the school year and summer. Training opportunities include Boy Town training, a comprehensive Drug/Alcohol/Violence/Tobacco prevention program, Reading Recovery, SD READS, CPR, a special education curriculum department was added to the instructional council of the district, technology and Step Academy for paraprofessionals.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting the requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- IDEA-B flow through funds application
- Comprehensive plan
- State Tables F, K, I
- Sims data
- School improvement plan
- Student files
- TAT information
- File reviews
- IEP's
- Initial referrals

Meets requirements

Meade School District provides a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. All assurances are available for review.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting the requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- MDT/eligibility report
- Student file reviews
- Surveys (parents, students, staff)
- State data tables
- Logs
- IEP
- Psychological reports
- List of tests currently being used in district
- Comprehensive plan
- Interview
- Student file review tabulation
- Inservice training documentation
- TAT information

Promising practice

Special education case managers are effective in enhancing communication with parents by building positive partnerships and breaking down deep rooted barriers and obstacles.

Meade school district has an efficient and effective evaluation process. One highly trained school psychologist and testing facilitator conduct all evaluations on students. The continuity this team provides is outstanding. By having one person conduct the ability and achievement tests, it ensures a consistent, accurate measure of the child. Different teacher inconsistencies and varieties in test administration is taken out of the equation.

No due process or IEE have been requested by parents in several years. If any team member questions an evaluation result, further testing is done by school personnel to ensure accurate validity and reliability. Meade School District has a large testing library with various abilities, achievement and behavior assessments available.

No student that is scheduled for a reevaluation is determined to not need additional information/assessment. Every student on a current IEP that needs a reevaluation is given a full comprehensive evaluation including IQ and achievement, in all areas of disability and further suspected disability.

Meets requirements

Special education case managers are effective in enhancing communication with parents by building positive partnerships and breaking down deep rooted barriers and obstacles.

Meade School District has an efficient and effective evaluation process. One highly trained school psychologist and testing facilitator conduct all evaluations on students. The continuity this team provides is outstanding. By having one person conduct the ability and achievement tests, it ensures a consistent, accurate measure of the child. Different teacher inconsistencies and varieties in test administration is taken out of the equation.

No due process or IEE have been requested by parents in several years. If any team member questions an evaluation result, further testing is done by school personnel to ensure accurate validity and reliability. Meade School District has a large testing library with various abilities, achievement and behavior assessments available.

No student scheduled for a reevaluation is determined to not need additional information/assessment. Every student on a current IEP in need of a reevaluation is given a full comprehensive evaluation including intelligence and achievement, in all areas of disability and further suspected disability.

Great effort is made by the district-wide special education staff to obtain written parental consent for evaluation 100% of the time. The case managers play a vital role in assisting with this effort by building a partnership with the families. Initiating communication to homes is done by cold calls home, sending happy notes and leaving positive messages on home answering machines. Developing strong parent relationships is a performance evaluation criteria for all special education staff. Through this crucial communication link, case managers help to assure parents understand and are involved in the evaluation process.

Through the multidisciplinary assessment team which can include the school psychologist, test facilitator, general education and special education teacher, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, nurse, private evaluators, medical personnel and parents, comprehensive evaluations are conducted on students. If a disability is found the team determines if it has an adverse affect on the child's education program.

100% of the files reviewed acquired written consent for reevaluation from parents. Multiple efforts such as phone calls, emails, certified letters, and home visits are made by Meade school district staff to acquire parent consent for reevaluation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through review of state data tables, a review of student records and staff interviews, the monitoring team found the district has an efficient and effective evaluation process, no due process hearing or IEE have been requested and students receive a comprehensive evaluation. Special education case managers continue to play a vital role in enhancing communication with parents by building positive partnerships and breaking down deep rooted barriers and obstacles.

Through review of student records and staff interviews, the monitoring team found special education teachers are successful in obtaining consent for all initial and three year re-evaluations and the district's testing library includes the latest revisions of tests and a variety of assessments to meet the needs of all learner's. Each child is evaluated by a multidisciplinary team which includes related service personnel and other specialists.

Needs improvement

Through interviews and file reviews the monitoring team determined parental input into the evaluation process is not consistently completed prior to the completion of the prior notice. In 7 of 42 files

reviewed, parent input into the evaluation process was not included in the file. In other files, the monitoring team noted the special education and related service providers phoned the parent and documented the information on the phone log and other special education teachers phoned the parent and documented the evaluation information on the prior notice and some staff did both. The monitoring team determined parent input into the evaluation process needs improvement.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

The school district shall ensure a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents that may assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability and content of the child's IEP. The school district shall ensure the child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.

In three student files, evaluations did not include the area of behavior. File information reviewed indicated the presence of behavior concerns, including the requirement for continuous prompts, late assignments, inappropriate behavior, missing materials or assignments and requires daily assistance to complete independent work.

ARSD 24:05:24:01:09 Developmental delay defined.

A student three, four, or five years old maybe identified as a student with a disability if the student has one of the major disabilities listed in 24:05:24.01:01 or if the student experiences a severe delay in development. A student with a severe delay in development functions at a developmental level two or more standard deviations below the mean in any one area of development specified in this section or 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas of development. The areas of development are cognitive development, physical development, communication development, social and emotional development, and adaptive functioning skills. The student may not be identified as a student with a disability if the student's delay in development is due to factors related to environment, economic disadvantage, or cultural difference. A district is not required to adopt and use the term developmental delay for any students within its jurisdiction. If a district uses the term developmental delay, the district must conform to both the division's definition of the term and to the age range that has been adopted by the division. A district shall ensure that all of the student's special education and related services needs that have been identified through the evaluation procedures described under chapter 24:05:25 are appropriately addressed.

A student with a date of birth 12-7-97 was evaluated in September and October of 2004. The student turned 6 on 12-7-03 therefore, the evaluation was not completed prior to the student's 6th birthday.

Issues requiring immediate attention

24:05:22:03. Certified child

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count.

The review team identified the following issues regarding two students:

1. Tests scores for student # 1 yielded an IQ of 73 with the lowest achievement score of 73. A regression score of 67 or below would be needed to verify eligibility under the category of learning disabled. The IEP team determined an IEP team override was needed. The override

form did not explain why the standards and procedures that are used with the majority of students resulted in invalid findings for this student.

2. Student # 2 was formerly listed on the 2003 child count as Other Health Impaired and then changed to Autism on the 2004 child count. The evaluation team reevaluated the student in April-May of 2004. The team administered an intelligence test, an achievement test, behavior assessment and gathered functional information however, did not include information to support placement in the area of autism. Following that evaluation the team referred the student to Jean Hoem, MS,LPC-MH, QMHP for further evaluation. Ms. Hoem did not complete an autism evaluation but made a diagnosis of asperger's disorder based on observation and review of previous intelligence scores.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent rights booklet
- Surveys
- Teacher files reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
- State Table L and M
- Surrogate document
- Student files

Promising practice

Meade School District has not had a complaint filed with the special education programs in seven years. The district has not had a request for a due process hearing. This is in large part the result of positive and open communication between the family and the school staff.

Meade School District has positive and open communication between the family and the school staff. Strong partnerships are built among the IEP team. As a result the district has not had a complaint filed with the special education programs or a request for a due process hearing in seven years.

Meets requirements

Meade School utilizes the state developed Parents Right Booklet which contains all the necessary information. 100% of the parents surveyed indicated information from school was written in their own language. Parental Rights are given at every IEP meeting and with all consent and prior notice forms. The Meade School District consent form contains all the required information. Consent was acquired by 100% of the parents for evaluation. No parent has revoked consent for placement of services.

Policies and procedures are in place in Meade School District to ensure the rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified. The districts comprehensive plan outlines all requirements on the issue of

surrogate parents. Meade School District follows the comprehensive plan for confidentiality and access to records. All procedures for due process are addressed in the comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through staff interviews, the monitoring team noted positive and open communication between family, school staff and strong partnerships have been built with outside agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, Black Hills Special Services Autism team, Black Hills State University, Court Services and many community businesses.

Meets requirements

Through review of state data tables and staff interviews, the monitoring team found the district has not had a complaint filed with the special education program within seven years.

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- IEPs
- State data tables
- Surveys
- Student progress data
- Transition data from district

Promising practice

Meade School District 46-1 has an outstanding transition program. In 2001, it was named one of the twenty-two promising practices in transition in the nation. The goal at Sturgis Brown High School is that the IEP be the vision of the students and the parents, with the student being the driving force behind his/her IEP. The case manager is the facilitator that gathers information from individuals involved in the student's life. Our program encourages students to understand and to have the ability to voice their needs and desires so that this information can be used while determining educational planning and program direction.

Six special education teachers make up the high school transition program. Together, they have developed curriculum and transition packets that are sent all over the United States. A packet will be made available upon request. The special education teachers present their program to numerous audiences at colleges, state workshops and national conferences. Many times, students with disabilities are also a part of the presentation. The students talk about their high school program, their disabilities and how they have

learned to decide a path for themselves once they graduate. Two very unique classes support the Transition programs. Most students on IEPs go through an Advocacy Program that is connected to the Social Studies class. Students typically start the Advocacy Program in their freshman year and continue until their senior year if their schedule permits. The students study in-depth their disability, the workings of their IEP and learn how to self-advocate for themselves at school, home and on the job. The high school students in the Advocacy Class are the directors of their IEP and usually lead most of the discussions. In addition, most all students on IEPs take an Employability class that involves learning about jobs, writing resumes, participating in mock interviews and researching their career choice for post high school. Each student on an IEP must participate in at least one paid or unpaid work experience in the community before graduating. Most students participate in more than one. Students obtain jobs on their own utilizing their own capabilities or they receive services from the job developer and job coach when needed. The businesses of Sturgis are outstanding in allowing students with disabilities to gain work experience in their establishment. The businesses range from McDonalds, to the Computer Shop, to the local dentist, to the City of Sturgis with many companies in between.

Students and their families may be faced with a multitude of service options, each with its own eligibility requirements. Investigating adult services and eligibility requirements are crucial aspects of planning for a student's future. Case managers, students, parents, school counselors, teachers, transition specialists, and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors play an integral role in achieving the student's post secondary goals. Students partake in Career Days, Post High School Planning Day and have counseling sessions with school counselors. The Sturgis Brown High School Transition Program has a strong partnership with outside agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, Adjustment Training Centers, Social Security Administration, ASFC/Social Service, SD Advocacy, Job Corps, Low Income Housing, and Western Resource. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors often come to IEPs to further explain their services to the team members. Project Skills is the common service that is utilized by the students in high school from Voc. Rehabilitation.

Meets requirements

Special education teachers have been inserviced on how to write a correct and parent friendly prior notice. The prior notice is regarded as the agenda of the IEP meeting.

At the beginning of the school year 2004, the principals of the district have developed a more uniform system to ensure administrative attendance at every IEP meeting. Correspondence between the special education director and principals has ensured a 100% administrative attendance at IEP meetings.

Building principals are excellent in prompting general education teachers being active participants in IEP team meetings.

Many of the special education teachers/case managers have general education teachers sign a form when they are given a student's IEP or copy of the modification page. General education teachers are given the IEP information they need at the start of the school year, at a class schedule change and at semester if applicable. The form gives documentation of the classroom teachers having the information they are responsible for implementing. The form is kept in the IEP file.

A portion of a teacher's performance review or annual evaluation is dedicated to IEP compliance and meeting the rules and regulations of special education. The Special Education Director conducts file reviews for each special education teacher at least one time a year.

In 2000, Meade school district was found to be out of compliance in the area of related services in regards to transportation. It was noted that there were very few instances of transportation being offered as a related service. Since this finding, Meade school district has contracted with Black Hills Special Services to provide all transportation needs to students that require it to benefit from their special education

program. In addition, two additional cars were purchased for the special education program and a driver hired to provide individual transportation when needed. Special education teachers were also given the consent to offer parents reimbursement if they chose to transport their own child. the special education program and a driver hired to provide individual transportation when needed. Special education teachers were also given the consent to offer parents reimbursement if they chose to transport their own child.

Meade school district meets the requirement for transition services and the services are documented correctly on the IEP transition pages.

The Sturgis Williams Middle School strives for a seamless transition from the middle school setting to the high school. The Middle School students set their high school schedule in the spring prior to entering high school in the fall. The students are able to visit the high school and tour the facility. A freshman orientation is given to all students and their families to ensure a smooth transition.

Through large group and individual staff development, each special education teacher and related service provider is very knowledgeable of writing appropriate IEPs and ensuring services are in place, monitoring all aspects on a consistent basis.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through observation, presentation by students, file reviews and staff interviews, the monitoring team agrees the Meade school district has an outstanding transition program. The goal of Sturgis Brown High School is the IEP be the vision of the students and parents, with the student being the driving force behind his/her IEP. The students have opportunity to voice their needs and desires so the information can be used for educational planning and program direction.

The monitoring team was able to attend a presentation by the students. The students talk about their disability and the impact on their education. They discuss their individualized high school program and the path toward graduation. As the student moves through the program of self advocacy they learn how to lead the discussion during their IEP meeting. Multiple service options are available through partnerships with community organizations, businesses, a strong relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation, Adjustment Training Centers, Social Security Administration, Social Services, SD Advocacy, Job Corps, Low Income Housing and Western Resources.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting the requirements for individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

Extended school year is listed as a promising practice under Principle One. Through staff interviews, review of files and some updated self assessment information presented by the special education director, the monitoring team disagrees with extended school year as a promising practice. In four of 42 files reviewed, the team marked "needed" and addressed extended school year using regression/recoupment, emerging skills or maintenance of critical life skills. Data to support regression/recoupment, emerging skills or maintenance of critical life skills was not consistently available. In 12 of 42 files reviewed, the IEP team marked "to be determined" by a given date prior to the end of the school year. During interviews, six of 24 special education teachers reported extended school year was available to any student on an IEP. Approximately, 19% of the total special education child count received extended school year services in 2003 and about 20% in 2004.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of IEP

Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives related to: meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; and meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability.

In 12 of 42 files reviewed, the monitoring team noted annual goals are directly taken from the content standards and therefore broad, vague and not measurable. The words increase, appropriate and improve were consistently used in the writing of annual goals. Example:

- The student will develop and use number sense to investigate the characteristics of numbers in a variety of forms and modes of operation. (G4)
- The student will write effectively for different audiences and specific purposes.
- The student will correctly answer comprehension questions at a 5.3 reading level.
- The student will demonstrate appropriate classroom skills.
- The student will use and apply stimulus, patterns, environment and written work from various media outlets for comprehension (extended standard E.R. 1.2 and 1.3)
- The student will speak effectively in a variety of formal and informal situations.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables
- File reviews
- Parent, student, general education surveys
- General curriculum information
- Age of placement
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information

Promising practice

The seven principals of Meade school district are extremely supportive of educating all students in the least restrictive environment. They are quick to educate and encourage general education teachers in serving students with special needs in the regular classroom. The principals provide informal strategies and mini lessons at staff meetings in teaching all levels of learners. The principals are outstanding in providing or supporting professional development opportunities for teachers in learning how to work with students of all abilities.

In January 2002, the KIND (Kids in a New Direction) room was created. This classroom is designed for elementary special education students with severe behavior difficulties that prevent them from being successful in the general classroom or resource room. The average ratio is one certified teacher and one aid to five students. The KIND room gives students another option in a lesser restrictive environment

before being placed in an out-of-district or residential placement. Many students have learned enough appropriate behavior skills that enable them to be reintegrated back into the general classroom. The staff have been intensely trained in the Boys Town program and it is exclusively used with the students. The KIND room has prevented many out-of-district placements for young children and has aided in their success both academically and personally.

Preschool students that qualify for speech and language services only are given an opportunity to attend an early intervention classroom in addition to individual speech therapy sessions. It is the early intervention philosophy that these preschool children blossom in a language enriched classroom. Technically, these students do not qualify for early intervention classes but the district provides the service because “it’s best for the child.”

Meets requirements

The district meets the needs for least restrictive environment. Non disabled preschool children are integrated with the preschool children with disabilities.

The following table shows the percentage of special education students in each building not including students on speech IEPs only, and the number of special education teachers.

Sped Students				
Whitewood	7%	9	1	Special Education Teacher
Rural	7%	6	1	Special Education Teacher
High School	8%	68	6	Special Education Teacher
Middle School	9%	63	6	Special Education Teacher
Piedmont/Stagebarn	6%	26	3	Special Education Teacher
Sturgis Elementary	3%	17	5	Special Education Teacher

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through observation and staff interviews, the monitoring team agrees Kids in a New Direction, a classroom designed for elementary special education students with severe behavior difficulties is a promising practices as concluded by the steering committee.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting the requirements for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.